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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 /073 W
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R 122155Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6825
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY CARACAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 2682

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, SHUM, NU
SUBJECT: CATHOLIC CHURCH VIEWPOINTS

SUMMARY: IN SEPARATE MEETINGS WITH ARCHBISHOP AND PAPAL NUNCIO, AMB AND POLOFF FIND THE CHURCH'S VIEW ON THE CURRENT NICARAGUAN SCENE TO LARGELY COINCIDE WITH EMB APPRAISAL: I.E., THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT INDICATION OF OPPOSITION PREPAREDNESS TO UNDERTAKE ANY FORM OF DIALOG WITH SOMOZA, WHICH LEAVES THE FIELD OPEN TO NON-DEMOCRATIC FORCES. THE CHURCH IS NOT PRESENTLY PREPARED TO PUSH OR LEAD OPPOSITIONISTS TOWARD A DIALOG, BUT RECOGNIZES THAT IT WILL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY AT SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE. END SUMMARY

1. AMB AND POLOFF MET WITH ARCHBISHOP OBANDO Y BRAVO ON JUNE 1. OBANDO EXPRESSED HIS PREOCCUPATION WITH CONDITIONS IN NICARAGUA IN WHICH FURTHER VIOLENCE SEEMS INEVITABLE AND THE GON APPEARS TO BE MOVING TOWARDS GREATER REPRESSION OBANDO CITED THE RECENT INSTANCES OF THE GN MOVING SWIFTLY TO DISLODGE STUDENTS WHEN THEY HAD ATTEMPTED TO CLOSE SCHOOLS. OBANDO AGREED WITH AMB THAT THE TIME MAY HAVE PASSED WHEN MODERATE OPPOSITIONISTS HAD SOMOZA AT HIS
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WEAKEST BARGAINING POSITION AND MOST PREPARED TO OFFER CONCESSIONS. HE SAID HE MAINTAINED CONTACT WITH OPPOSITION LEADERS AND EVEN THOUGH SOME OF THEM WERE NOT CONVINCED THEY WOULD EVENTUALLY HAVE TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR A POLITICAL INITIATIVE TO ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN CONCESSIONS FROM THE GON, THERE WERE STILL THOSE WHO REMAINED INTRANSIGENT ON DEALING WITH SOMOZA. IN THIS CATEGORY, HE MENTIONED REYNALDO ANTONIO TEFEL, THE DIRECTOR OF A HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

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INSTITUTE (INPRHU), WHO HAS A BACKGROUND AS A SOCIAL CHRISTIAN AND EXERCISES AN IMPORTANT INFLUENCE WITH UDEL LEADERS, BUT IS NOT PRESENTLY IDENTIFIED WITH ANY POLITICAL PARTY.

2. OBANDO ACCEPTED THAT THE CHURCH WOULD HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN HELPING TO BRING TOGETHER THE CONTENDING POLITICAL FORCES BUT DID NOT APPEAR TO ACCEPT THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO DO SO NOW. HE SAID THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THERE WERE PEOPLE WHO HAD NO INTEREST IN A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS, THAT SOME WERE ALREADY COMMITTED TO SUPPORT FSLN ACTIONS. OBANDO REPEATED EARLIER COMMENTS TO THE EFFECT THAT MANY POLITICAL LEADERS LOOKED TO THE US TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN RE-ESTABLISHING PEACE IN NICARAGUA.

3. THE PAPAL NUNCIO, IN A MEETING WITH AMB AND POLOFF ON JUNE 6, EXPRESSED HIS PESSIMISM ABOUT THE LIKELIHOOD OF FURTHER VIOLENCE. HE SAID HE DID NOT FEEL, HOWEVER, THAT THE REVOLUTIONARIES HAD THE POTENTIAL TO OVERTHROW THE GON. THE NUNCIO COMMENTED THAT THE POPE'S MESSAGE TO THE NICARAGUAN BISHOPS (WHICH WILL NOT BE MADE PUBLIC UNTIL ALL OF THEM HAVE RETURNED TO NICARAGUA) INSTRUCTED THEM TO AVOID TAKING SIDES IN THE CURRENT POLITICAL CONFRONTATION AND, ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, INSTRUCTED THEM TO PROMOTE PEACEFUL ACCOMMODA-TION.

4. THE NUNCIO, WHO HAS THE REPUTATION OF BEING CONSERVATIVE AMONG SOME ELEMENTS OF THE CHURCH, REFERRED TO THE PROBLEM OF POLITICALLY CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTIVE LEFTISTS WITHIN THE CHURCH. HE SAID HE KNOWS, AS A FACT, THAT THE GROUP OF 12 (WHICH INCLUDES TWO CATHOLIC PRIESTS) HAD RECEIVED THREE MILLION DOLLARS FROM VENEZUELA FOR THE PURCHASE OF WEAPONS FOR THE FSLN. HE SAID HE DID NOT THINK THE CASES OF FOREIGN PRIESTS DENIED ENTRY TO NICARAGUA REPRESENTED GON REPRESSION AGAINST THE CHURCH BUT, RATHER, RESULTED FROM QUESTIONABLE ACTIVITIES OF THE PRIESTS. HE SAID THE CHURCH HAD NO BASIS FOR PROTEST WHEN THE PRIESTS OPTED FOR POLITICAL ACTIVISM RATHER THAN CONFIRMING THEM-SELVES TO THE RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL CONCERN OF THE CHURCH.

5. THE NUNCIO INDICATED HE WOULD CONSIDER WAYS IN WHICH HE COULD FURTHER PEACEFUL POLITICAL ACTION BY NICARAGUAN OPINION LEADERS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CATHOLICS, MEETINGS, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MANAGU02682
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P780187-2571, D780247-0870
Format: TEL
From: MANAGUA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780670/aaaacigk.tel
Line Count: 107
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Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2395014
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NO TITLE
TAGS: SHUM, PGOV, PINT, NU
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/f8c5568b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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